



**SOCIAL MEDIA AND INFIDELITY IN MARRIAGE VIS-À-VIS CCC 2380: A
MORAL-THEOLOGICAL STUDY OF IGBO CHRISTIAN
FAMILIES, NIGERIA**

Chukwudebelu, Cyprian Oluchukwu

Department of Moral Theology
Catholic Institute of West Africa, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria
cychuks20gmail.com

Abstract

Family, established through marriage, is the smallest unit of every society. Marriage, however, being the union of a man and woman to become life partners, is faced with a myriad of challenges. These challenges and hurdles range from a lack of mutual understanding, respect, and trust between couples to intolerance and even infidelity. There are many more. Nowadays, marriage is being plagued, more than ever, with issues and cases of infidelity arising from and/or heightened by the use of social media. The link, connectivity, and relative privacy provided by social networks like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, LinkedIn, and so on seem to have escalated and complicated the problem of infidelity in marriage. As a result, mutual suspicion and acrimony have increased just as infidelity is increasing between couples. This work, therefore, is an improvement and enrichment of the already ongoing discourse on the subject matter of infidelity in marriage. It serves to expose the situation on the ground and to stimulate/trigger further research on the topic of discourse.

Keywords: social media, marriage, infidelity

Introduction

Marriage is a good thing. It is necessary for procreation and is as old as mankind. It is unarguably a natural institution. It is so necessary for the reproduction and sustenance of mankind that from the beginning, man was wired to seek partnership and complementarity with a woman and vice versa. Social media, on the other hand, while not being there from the beginning, has so aided and affected human communications and relationships in a very tremendous and striking way that even marriage is not left out.

It is indubitable that many young men and women who are preparing for marriage are connected to one social network or the other. Many of those who are already married are also active on social networks. Social media has made communication global, easy, and faster. Many of the times, it is also cheaper, depending on the social network and the location it is operated. Some spouses who are now happily married even got to know their fiancé(e) through social media. Yes! Some have dared to tie the knots with persons met on social media and have not had reasons to regret their actions. Some, however, have regretted that, especially those who were too quick to hop into marriage without doing a diligent study or inquiry of their partners.

Unfortunately, many marriages are suffering crises as a result of some connections or reunions with “friends” made possible by the use of social media. A lot of hearts and homes have been broken as a result of the extra-marital affairs that sprouted from the use of the innovative social media. As it unites and deepens love being spouses, so it also tears some couples apart from



each other. It has, therefore, become necessary and imperative to navigate the negative reality of infidelity in Christian families, with particular focus on Nigerian Igbos.

Concept of Marriage

Marriage is a natural institution. It has been in existence since the existence of man. It is a culturally and often legally recognised union between people who call themselves spouses. Mary Jane Aririguzo, in her *Invalidating Juridical Fact in Marriage: The Case of Consensual Incapacity (Can. 1095, n. 1)*, contained in Journal of Canon Law, Moral Theology and Pastoral/Spiritual Theology, opines that:

Marriage is a natural institution in which a man and a woman, having reached the prescribed age and possessing the necessary capacity, have the right to contract through a duly expressed free and full consent. It is a juridical act which involves a wilful human act which the contracting parties must be capable of engaging in. (29)

Such a formal union establishes rights and obligations of the spouses both to themselves and to society, between themselves and their children. With marriage, two families or more are brought together, especially in the Nigerian context. It is considered a cultural universal. But the definition of marriage varies between cultures and religions, and with time. Typically, it is an institution in which interpersonal relationships, usually sexual, are acknowledged or sanctioned. In some cultures, marriage is recommended or considered to be compulsory before pursuing or engaging in any sexual activity. A marriage ceremony is usually called a wedding.

Individuals marry for varied reasons, ranging from or including social, legal, emotional, financial, spiritual, libidinal, and religious purposes. Who they marry can be determined or influenced by gender, cultural rules or stipulations, like laws on incest, etc. It can also be influenced by individual desire or by parental choice.

In some parts of the world, arranged marriage, polygamy, forced marriage, and child marriage are practiced. In some other areas, such practices are prohibited so as to preserve and promote the rights of women and/or the rights of both male and female children. This is the case because in some parts of the world, marriage has restricted the rights of women and even made many of them look like the property of men. Women were considered inferior and mostly only prepared for marriage. That explains why in some cultures and families in Nigeria, the girl child is not trained to the highest level of education, many of times.

There has been a general trend towards ensuring equal rights for women within marriage, especially in developed countries, thereby abolishing practices like *couverture*, liberalising laws on divorce, reforming reproductive and sexual laws, and allowing interfaith and interracial marriages. Again, female age at marriage is also a serious factor that cannot be overlooked. Issues of bride price, dowry, premarital and extramarital affairs, and even the rising trend in developed countries about same sex marriage are yet more developments in the context of marriage in contemporary times.

General Notion of Infidelity

Infidelity, adultery, or cheating is a form of betrayal. It can occur as sexual infidelity, emotional infidelity, or a combination of both. It does not necessarily mean or signal an end of love in



marriage, but it does engender distrust, heartbreak, and lead to serious friction in marriage. If couples sincerely agree to work on the issues of infidelity, relationships can be restored.

The fact is that what constitutes infidelity in marriage and how it is viewed differs based on individual beliefs, values, probably mutual agreements and expectations from the marriage. Acts like viewing pornography, indulging in sex outside the relationship, unfaithful behavior, and emotional affairs can be viewed as infidelity. There might still be some who would not consider things like viewing of pornography a serious issue.

Being that infidelity is a breach of trust that signifies a lack of faithfulness to a moral obligation to one's partner, some reasons have been advanced why some people cheat on their spouses. Emotional or physical disconnect is one of the reasons. Unmet needs, uncontrolled sexual desire, wanting variety, low self-esteem, having commitment issues, and jealousy. Marriage is work, and without mutual nurturing, couples may grow apart. A sexless marriage is often claimed as a reason for both men and women cheating.

It is said that men are more likely to cheat than women, because men depend on physical sexual expression than emotional expression. So a man who has a wife who declines sex to him often might have a feeling of rejection. Women are more likely to complain of disconnection from a spouse, and of the wish to be desired and cherished. Women are more likely to feel unappreciated or ignored and seek emotional intimacy in an extra-marital relationship. Apart from sexual satisfaction as a factor, boredom with a marital relationship may lead both men and women to cheat.

Addiction and a history of childhood physical, emotional, or sexual abuse can be factors in marital infidelity. Someone who had been exposed to parents who were cheating is likely to have extramarital affairs, and someone who has cheated in the past is likely to cheat again. Psychological disorders like narcissistic traits or personality disorders are associated with a greater likelihood of cheating. Self-centredness driven by ego and a sense of entitlement makes people lack empathy, which makes them not appreciate the impact of their actions on their spouse.

Frances Leary, the author of *101 Ways to Use Social Media to Do Good*, opines that boundaries should be set in our use of social media to avoid compromise. This is very crucial and imperative for spouses to avoid what could lead to infidelity in marriage. He writes thus:

We encounter content that inspires us, lifts us up, or makes us laugh, and we also encounter situations that can lead to darkness if we let them. This darkness may be bullying or expressions of negative mindsets or unwelcome romantic advances. It can appear in many forms if we allow it to. We have a choice. By defining our personal boundaries, we make conscious choices about what (and whom) we do and do not want to encounter on social media. This begins with choosing whom to connect with and how to control our privacy. It extends to how you choose to engage (with what and with whom). It also includes when you will take action to remove something or someone from your social media world. When we come face-to-face with those people or situations that make us uncomfortable or attempt to compromise the boundaries we have set for ourselves, we have a choice: stand by and do nothing or take action to eliminate that situation. (120)



Furthermore, infidelity can be triggered or enhanced by domestic violence, lack of respect, lack of communication, and financial pressures. Low compatibility can also lead to infidelity because the couple may have married for the wrong reasons, either because of money, wealth, or status. Feeling unappreciated can bring about seeking validation outside the marital home, which can lead to infidelity.

Understanding Social Media

The term “social media” is an expression used to refer to a computer-based technology that enables or enhances the sharing of thoughts, ideas, and information through virtual networks and communities. Social media is internet-based and allows users easy and quick communication of content, such as personal information, videos, photos, and documents. To be able to engage in social media communication, users would need a computer, tablet, or smartphone connected to web-based software or applications. Even though social media is everywhere in Europe and America, it is said that Asian countries like Indonesia lead the list of social media usage.

Social media originated as a way of interacting with friends and family, even though businesses later started adopting it for the purpose of taking advantage of its popularity in addition to the ease and reach it guarantees. The uniqueness and power of social media is the ability to connect and share information with anyone, anywhere on earth, or with many people simultaneously.

There are more than 3.8 billion social media users around the world. Social media is ever-changing and fast evolving, always introducing new apps like TikTok and Clubhouse. New apps come out almost every year, joining the ranks of established social networks like Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter. It is projected that by the year 2023, the number of social media users in the United States will increase to approximately 257 million. And nearly 90% of the users are people between the ages of 18 and 29.

For individuals, social media serves to help them keep in touch with friends and family members. Some people use it to network career opportunities, find people across the globe with like-minded interests, and to share their thoughts, feelings, insights, and emotions. This is what is called a virtual social network. Social media helps businesses drive sales through advertising and promotion, gauge consumer trends, and offer customer service support. In the context of this work, however, we shall restrict our discussion of it to family and friends.

Social Media and Infidelity

Research has shown that increased usage of social media has had a negative effect on marriages and relationships. Higher levels of social media usage have led to more marital problems, infidelity, conflicts, jealousy, and eventually divorce. Social media has changed the way we meet and interact with each other. It provides a platform to learn more about people and associate with them. It has, however, contributed to and exacerbated problems in romantic relationships. That is not to say that it does not offer a positive and useful contribution and enhancement in marriages and relationships, however.

Nowadays, people spend too much time on social media like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, etc. It has been established that it is not just what one does on social media but also



how long one stays on social media that can create conflict. Excessive spending of time on social media can impact romantic relationships. It was also discovered that a 20% annual increase in Facebook enrollment was associated with a 2.18% increase in divorce rates. It shows that people who do not use social media are 11% happier in their marriages than people who regularly use social media.

Social media provides easy access for a jealous or suspicious spouse to seek out information about the interactions of a significant other. Whether the suspicions are founded or unfounded, people often feel uneasy after discovering something suspicious about their partners on social media. This often leads to increased monitoring, jealousy, anger, and conflict in relationships. Researchers have found that the more a person examines their partner's Facebook activity, the more the person reports jealousy and mistrust.

It is not only the spouse of the cheating person who can monitor the communications going on. Even some others can monitor them too, either as spies or otherwise, legally or illegally. Regarding this, Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Fratelli Tutti*, submits:

Oddly enough, while closed and intolerant attitudes towards others are on the rise, distances are otherwise shrinking or disappearing to the point that the right to privacy scarcely exists. Everything has become a kind of spectacle to be examined and inspected, and people's lives are now under constant surveillance. Digital communication wants to bring everything out into the open; people's lives are combed over, laid bare, and bandied about, often anonymously. Respect for others disintegrates, and even as we dismiss, ignore or keep others distant, we can shamelessly peer into every detail of their lives. (FT, 42)

It must, however, not be left unsaid that social media has contributed to bringing together as husbands and wives people who met themselves casually online. Many of such persons, especially in the United States, have remained together without serious hitches.

It is very crucial for spouses to discuss their use of social media and find a way to control any excesses that might come up from any of them at any point. Some couples make their passwords known to each other to help them remain checked or controlled. This is because infidelity usually thrives in secrecy, enhanced by privacy. This, however, is for couples to mutually agree upon. Sometimes, infidelity begins with an accidental or unexpected meeting or encounter and grows through social media communications. At times, it begins from a social media contact or encounter, and bonds keep getting built, deepening. Many times, this happens without the knowledge of one of the spouses, even though there might be guesses or suspicions. But sometimes, there is no suspicion at all, especially when the spouses trust each other.

Cheating in marriage often begins with lust or eagerness to try someone new, or to get money, or to have emotional needs satisfied. This gets deepened or escalated, enabled by the privacy and security afforded and guaranteed by social media networks. Often, romantic and erotic messages, images, and communications start flying to and fro. Sometimes, a change of attitude, unavailability, lies, unusual movement, and unnecessary irritation and intolerance are some of the signs that might be pointing to a spouse cheating.

Overview of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*



The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is an organized presentation of the essential teachings of the Catholic Church in regards to both faith and morals. When we talk about “the catechism” today, we are most likely referring to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, promulgated by Pope John Paul II in 1992 to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council.

This is the product of a decade of labour of bishops, theologians, and other experts who worked to provide us a compendium of all Catholic doctrine on faith and morals. The new catechism abandoned the question-and-answer form and used modern language in its prescriptions on faith, the Sacraments, sin, and prayer. All these were treated under the foundational themes of Trinity, Incarnation, Paschal Mystery, the Church, and the human person.

The text of this study, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2380, states:

Adultery refers to marital infidelity. When two partners, of whom at least one is married to another party, have sexual relations – even transient ones – they commit adultery. Christ condemns even adultery of mere desire. The sixth commandment and the New Testament forbid adultery; they see it as an image of the sin of idolatry. (CCC, 2380)

It is against the backdrop of this text that this work is initiated. And it is in line with the text of this document that the subject matter is discussed. Hence, this work is concerned with infidelity as it relates to social media, and is hinged and anchored on this text. This will not be completely or successfully done without bringing in some allied sources that have an intimate connection with *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, namely the Bible and the Magisterium.

Biblical Perspective on Infidelity

Infidelity in Christian marriage can be devastating and is indeed a draining experience. It can sometimes lead to violence and even divorce. Adultery is considered a great sin in the Bible as is recorded in Gen. 20:9 and Gen. 39:9. Maintaining a primary bond with one’s spouse is essential. Failing to hold one’s spouse as the most important human relationship is the beginning of problems. The Bible commands that marriage ought to be between one man and one woman, united by God (Gen.2:24, Mk. 10:7-9). Also, the Seventh Commandment in the Decalogue prohibits adultery (Ex. 20:14). Christ was even very firm and hard on the issue of infidelity, divorce, or remarriage that He saying, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery (Lk. 16:18, Mk. 10:11-12). Going even harder, Christ says that anyone who “looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mtt. 5:27-28). Prov. 6:32 says that “A man who commits adultery has no sense; whoever does so destroys himself”. Paul in 1Cor. 6:9-11 holds that wrongdoers, the sexually immoral, and adulterers will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Magisterial Teachings on Marriage and Infidelity

The Magisterium has always held marriage in high esteem and with deep reverence, because apart from it being a natural institution, it is also a holy union through the elevation by Christ, and by its mission. Pope Pius XI, in his Encyclical *Casti Connubii*, writes thus:

How great is the dignity of chaste wedlock, Venerable Brethren, may be judged best from this that Christ Our Lord, Son of the Eternal Father, having assumed the nature



of fallen man, not only, with His loving desire of compassing the redemption of our race, ordained it in an especial manner as the principle and foundation of domestic society and therefore of all human intercourse, but also raised it to the rank of a truly and great sacrament of the New Law, restored it to the original purity of its divine institution, and accordingly entrusted all its discipline and care to His spouse the Church. (CC, 1)

To the magisterium of the Church, the sanctity of marriage (matrimony), its foundation or its purpose, is not debatable or negotiable or subject to change at any time, because the doctrine about it is fundamental and perennial. Hence, Pope Pius XI writes:

...let it be repeated as an immutable and inviolable fundamental doctrine that matrimony was not instituted or restored by man but by God; not by man were the laws made to strengthen and confirm and elevate it but by God, the Author of nature, and by Christ Our Lord by whom nature was redeemed, and hence these laws cannot be subject to any human decrees or to any contrary pact even of the spouses themselves. This is the doctrine of Holy Scripture; this is the constant tradition of the Universal Church; this the solemn definition of the sacred Council of Trent, which declares and establishes from the words of the Holy Writ itself that God is the Author of the perpetual stability of the marriage bond, its unity and its firmness. (CC, 5)

When issues of infidelity in marriage are mentioned, adultery readily comes to mind. Karl Peschke, in his work *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, states that adultery “is a sexual intercourse between two partners of different sex, of whom at least one is married. Besides the sin against chastity, adultery is also an offence against justice and fidelity. Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments condemn the sin of adultery in rather severe terms.” (474).

He goes further to say:

...adultery involves destructive consequences for the love, harmony and stability in the family of the married partners. The love of the partners who commit adultery will usually be divided. “Relations which can endanger the faithfulness reveal themselves by the claims of exclusiveness directed from within conversely towards others.” The persons will be drawn away from their first partners and families, which inevitably will weaken the stability of the original bonds. Further damage to love and harmony will be done if the innocent partner discovers the unfaithfulness of the marriage mate. Obviously adultery violates the fidelity promised by the marriage partners to each other and the pledges made in the marriage. (475)

Catholic News Agency reports Pope Francis as positing on October 31, 2018, that “Faithful married love, in which a husband loves his wife like Christ loves the Church, is ‘revolutionary’”. It reports that “The pope focused his remarks at the general audience on spousal fidelity in every vocation.” And the Pope rhetorically asks: “Who then is the adulterer, the lustful, the unfaithful?” “He is an immature person, who...interprets situations based on his well-being and satisfaction”, he continued. According to him, the human body is not an instrument of pleasure, but the place of our call to love, and in authentic love, there is no room for lust and for its superficiality. He is of the opinion that men and women deserve more.



Reflecting on his Encyclical on the family, *Familiaris Consortio*, Pope John Paul II wrote:

Christian spouses and parents are included in the universal call to sanctity. For them this call is specified by the sacrament they have celebrated and is carried out concretely in the realities proper to their conjugal and family life. This gives rise to the grace and requirement of an authentic and profound conjugal and family spirituality that draws its inspiration from the themes of creation, covenant, cross, resurrection, and sign which were stressed more than once by the Synod. (FC, 139-140)

Pope Francis, in his encyclical, *Amoris Laetitia*, speaks of marriage as that friendship that is characterised by a passion that is “always directed to an ever more stable and intense union.” (AL, 125) He further writes that:

... “marriage was not instituted solely for the procreation of children” but also that mutual love “might be properly expressed, that it should grow and mature”. This unique friendship between a man and a woman acquires an all-encompassing character only within the conjugal union. Precisely as all-encompassing this union is also exclusive, faithful and open to new life. (AL, 125)

The Church’s Position on the Use of Social Media

The Church, in *Communio et Progressio*, appreciates and values social communication and all of the means it uses because it believes their aim is “unity and advancement of men living in the society”. (CP, Art 27, no 1) Regarding social communication, the Church, through the Second Vatican Council Fathers, says that:

The constant improvement in the media puts them at the disposal of more people who in their daily lives make increasing use of them. More than ever before, the way men live and think is profoundly affected by the means of communication. The Church sees these media as “gifts of God” which, in accordance with his providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with his plan for their salvation. (CP, Art 27, nos 1-2)

The United States Conference of Bishops reiterated the words of Pope Francis in his message at the 48th World Communications Day in 2014, that communication is a means of expressing the missionary vocation of the entire Church. In his view, today, the social networks are one way to experience this call to discover the beauty of faith, the beauty of encountering Christ. He pointed out that in the area of communications, too, we need a Church capable of bringing warmth and of stirring hearts. Pope Francis also observed that what we see nowadays in communications media and technologies is a revolution which represents “a great thrilling challenge”. He, therefore, admonished that people should be able to respond to that challenge with fresh energy and imagination as we seek to share with others the beauty of God.

Pope Francis, addressing the participants of the 2022 World Congress of SIGNIS in Seoul, South Korea, remarked that the use of digital media, especially social media, has raised several serious ethical issues that call for wise and discerning judgment on the part of communicators and all those concerned with the authenticity and quality of human relationships.



George Augustin, in his book *Called to Love: Christian Marriage and Family Life*, wrote about marriage and the Sixth Commandment:

Everyone knows just how much suffering the breakup of a marriage can cause the spouses themselves as their children. Our daily experience of this gives us an insight into the contemporary relevance of and need for the Sixth Commandment. Unlike the case in the past, marriage today has in many cultures become something private, intimate and individualized. At the same time, strong social attitudes prohibiting adultery have also changed. A new sensitivity surrounding marital infidelity committed by the hurting of feelings and causing emotional upset is now commonplace. (65)

It is important, therefore, to be conscious of the potency and possibility of social media to constitute a serious problem for marriage partners in their faithfulness to themselves concerning their vow of married chastity. Discipline, self-restraint, and boundaries are very crucial so as to avoid the crises that could come from infidelity.

Overview of Igbo People

Igbo people are mostly located in the Southeastern part of Nigeria, West Africa. The southeast is currently made up of Anambra, Imo, Abia, Ebonyi, and Enugu states of Nigeria. There are other places outside these Eastern states where Igbo people can be found, too, in Nigeria. Places like Rivers State, Delta State, Cross River State, Akwa Ibom State, and Bayelsa State. But the Eastern States already mentioned earlier are the main homeland of the Igbo people. They are found in their dense population in those states. Apart from Nigeria, there are groups of people who speak Igbo found in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. They make up significant numbers.

Igbo people have strong traditional institutions and formidable governance structures. They mostly have their kings (Igwe/Eze) with their cabinets. They also have the eldest in nuclear families and heads in extended families, plus *Ndi Nze na Ozo*, who are given a pride of place in Igbo communities.

With these cultural and leadership structures, vices like infidelity are seen as a cankerworm in the life of any family. It does not align with the values of Igbo principles and philosophy. Hence, it is frowned upon. Some women were sent home to their parents' home by their husbands or even by their communities pending the time the infidelity allegation levelled against them was treated and resolved.

However, it is important to note that focus many of the focus is often on the woman when it comes to infidelity. Hence, women many times die in silence or feel they are not well treated or given the dignity they desire.

Infidelity among Igbo People

Having an extramarital affair after getting married is referred to as adultery, whether committed by a man or a woman. Adultery is considered taboo in Igbo society, generally. No community celebrates it. When committed by a woman, it is not just seen as an offence against the man and his family but also against the land and the gods. It is considered a sacrilege. In some Igbo communities, it is believed that a married woman who engages in an extramarital affair will go



mad if she does not confess publicly, and that if her husband eats her food knowingly, he might also die. Some rituals of purification are done to appease the gods and the land.

It is, however, important to note that in the issue of adultery, the focus seems to be more on women. The men who are involved in adultery do not seem to receive the same attention or punishment as women who commit the same. That is what is common in Igbo traditional society. Consequently, Okorie Albert, Ostar Christopher, and Chikwado Ezugworie write thus in their work, *An Assessment of the Traditional Penal Code for Adultery and the Operations of Women's Rights Instruments Among the Igbos, in South-Eastern Nigeria*:

Adultery is an offence which is frowned at in different cultures and societies the world over, however, the punishment systems defer [sic]. In Africa, punishments for adultery appear to be one sided as the female culprits bear the bulk of the punishment while their male counterparts go free with minimal or in some cases no punishment at all. (35)

In a nutshell, Igbo traditional society frowns at adultery, just like other taboos like having an affair with one's daughter, one's mother, or a widow. They dish out punishments for these, even though incest is considered more abominable. Sometimes, the woman involved in adultery may be sent home to his people, temporarily. At other times, she is permanently divorced. All this gives a general understanding of the position of Igbo people on infidelity in marriage, even though it is more focused on women.

The Implication of Infidelity for Christian Couples

Infidelity in marriage is a great injustice on the part of the spouse who is guilty of it. It causes harm and inflicts injury on the one who suffers it. "He who commits adultery fails in his commitment. He does injury to the sign of the covenant, which the marriage bond is, transgresses the rights of the other spouse, and undermines the institution of marriage by breaking the contract on which it is based" (CCC 2381).

It can lead to lack of trust and the dwindling of the love that exists between couples. Infidelity in marriage can bring shame and disrespect both from the spouse that is cheated and from people that get to know about the act. Cheating in marriage opens up the possibility of begetting child(ren) from another person outside the married family. It also creates the risks of spreading diseases. The crises that come from infidelity can lead to a broken home. The devastation that come from it is not only felt or suffered by the spouses themselves but also by their children. Children, especially, are left with divided or confused loyalty and hatred can easily be sowed in the hearts of children due to the trauma of having their parents separated due to marriage crises.

Infidelity usually makes domestic violence nearer to the home, as there are grudges, grievances, hatred, and perhaps intolerance arising from heartbreak and shame of suffering the infidelity from one's spouse. More so, it serves as a bad example for children from the family, as they may indulge in the same act in the future. By the act of infidelity, Christian couples are no longer showing their family a good "domestic church", where their children can be groomed in wisdom and upright living.



If a spouse keeps cheating in marriage, it increases the probability or chances that he or she would repeat such. Sometimes, too, it weakens the moral strength of his or her partner to resist the temptation of marital infidelity. What all these imply is that every Christian couple must strive to stay faithful to each other and do everything spiritually and physically necessary to avoid cheating in marriage. The bond and covenant of love they have entered into with each other must always be fanned and sustained, mutually.

Comparative Study of Infidelity in Christian Marriage and in Igbo Traditional Society

Christianity teaches that in the beginning, God created man and woman and ordained that they unite as husband and wife. Marriage, therefore, is as old as man. It is also a natural institution, but Jesus Christ elevated it to the dignity of a Sacrament and gave permanence and indissolubility to it.

The Sixth Commandment, therefore, forbids infidelity or adultery between couples who are united in the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony. “What God has united, let man put asunder.” Every indulgence in an extramarital affair is, as a result, viewed as a sin against God and an offence against one’s spouse. The Church, therefore, condemns it as morally evil and reprehensible.

The Church, however, does not favour or spare any gender, especially when it comes to infidelity in marriage. Infidelity by either a husband or a wife is condemned equally. Remorse and repentance, confession and amendment are usually the requirements of the Church when adultery is involved. The Church does not encourage divorce, nor does it support inhuman or one-sided treatment or punishment for infidelity. The Church’s approach to it is always pastoral and spiritual. She walks alongside the sinner with compassion, welcoming them back to the mercy of Christ. The Church respects and promotes human dignity, equal rights, and justice. Yet it rebukes and corrects immoral conduct as a mother she is and as God’s representative and agent on earth.

Unfortunately, in Igbo traditional society, men are seen as superior to women. Some men and families view them (women) as part of their property, having paid their dowry, and maybe because they cater for their needs. Women, generally, are seen as subjects in Igbo traditional society, though Christianity, enlightenment, and activism by some feminists and human rights organisations are now helping to change that erroneous mentality and narrative. Unlike the traditional society that threatens madness or death, or divorce against women, the Church preaches repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, chastity, and renewed commitment to fidelity to one’s spouse. Also, the Church respects both the man and the woman as equal partners in love and marriage, while advocating mutual respect between them, and submissiveness on the part of the woman.

The Way Forward

It is important to note that there can be a way out of this hydra-headed monster of infidelity that threatens the love and unity that ought to exist in the marriage and family. Social media should enhance and foster the peace that is essential for the unity and growth in marriage. Consequently, it is imperative to pay attention to the following points as remedies.



Love and Attention between Spouses

There is no gainsaying the fact that love attracts and bonds spouses to each other. The foundation of every marriage is love. It is that love that ensures and fosters mutual acceptance. Every human being needs love. It is more crucial and obligatory in marriage that couples love themselves unconditionally and give themselves enough attention as deserving of their partnership and companionship. Any marriage that lacks attention, which is spurred by love, is dying and on the verge of collapsing. Situations as that can enhance infidelity. Spouses are to always renew their love and give themselves prime and quality attention. This will make them take care of themselves and of their needs the much as they can, both financially and otherwise.

Respect and Trust

In a marriage, the man is seen as the head. However, it must be noted that marriage is a union of two persons who share equality in their beings as human beings. As such, each of them deserves and ought to give respect as required for human dignity. Disrespect or despise or denigration, or degrading can be a surge in negative feelings and hurt, which, when it fails to get restored, can make spouses start having a distaste for each other, thereby making infidelity via social media communications easier or an option. Trust is also essential because undue suspicion or false accusations against a spouse of infidelity can eventually lead a spouse to the real infidelity.

Disclosing Marital Status

It is a fact that many spouses hide their marital status, especially on social media networks. By so doing, the spouse is directly or indirectly sending a message that he or she is single. As a lot of people find their way to social networks, married and unmarried, morally conservative and morally decadent, a spouse ought to protect him or herself and safeguard their marriage by showing his or her marital status. Meanwhile, some people deny being married even when some signs or evidence are giving them away. Such a disposition and attitude breed social media-enhanced infidelity.

Sharing of Security Codes and Avoiding Idleness

Even though privacy is good and advisable to avoid interference, intrusion, or to allow one some discreet and positive secrecy, it is, however, recommended that couples who fear that they may be tempted to falter when unchecked can decide to co-own the security pin of their phones or of their social network Applications. This will help to keep them always in check.

Going far in social media communication often requires time and concentration. Hence, it is worth noting that idleness or having less to engage in is one of the things that enhances social media infidelity. A lot of time, many of the times, is spent online or on the internet seeking/establishing new friendships and sustaining the old ones. If someone is busy with something worthwhile, one might not have enough time to engage him or herself in negative talks.

Sexual Love

It must be emphasised that conjugal love is an essential part of Christian marriage since couples give themselves to each other both physically and spiritually. It is, therefore, necessary that both spouses make themselves available to each other. There have been cases of spouses complaining that their sacramentally married spouses deny or refuse them sexual intercourse.



This, some explain, is their reason for indulging in extramarital affairs. Sexual intimacy remains part and parcel of Christian marriage. However, spouses must not be insensitive to the disposition or condition of their partners. The attitude of seeing one's spouse as a mere object of satisfaction or of being sexually selfish must be avoided or eschewed.

Conclusion

This work has been able to bring to light, in a clear manner, the moral evil of infidelity and the way social media can aid it. Hinged on *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2380, the text views adultery as a sin against the Sixth Commandment. Christian marriage is exclusively mutual between the spouses who commit themselves to one another in love till death. So it admits of no third party or any external sexual affair.

In this article, the author navigated through the thoughts and views of different authors and teachings of the Church, to establish, in a vivid manner, that infidelity through social media is objectionable. He did this, enumerating the factors that can lead to it and the consequences that can emanate therefrom.

The article suggests love and attention, trust, and respect between spouses as the ingredients that can aid the curbing infidelity through social media. It also recommends showing one's true marital status, sharing security codes of social media networks between spouses, and being sexually available for one's partner, as other ways to solve the problem of infidelity via social media.

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